

Belize story continued...

Operation Cyclops and from VOSH Ohio, Volunteers in Optometry to Serve Humanity. Also more than 5,000 toothbrushes and individual toothpastes were donated as well.



The optometry clinic took more than 7,000 pairs of glasses to Belize.

The unit deployed all this along with vitamins, combs, hearing aides, a 450-pound dental chair and nearly 1000 toys and books to give to the local children. Unused medications and supplies were donated to a local hospital to dispense to patients after the Guard unit left.

Shipping all of the equipment, medications, supplies and personnel was no easy task. Master Sgt. Brad Hess was primarily responsible for making sure everything and everyone arrived in country, on time and in a safe manner. The 179th Medical Squadron Logistics Flight, otherwise known as the Med-Log Dogs, prepared, packed and palletized 15 tons of equipment for shipment to Belize on a C-130 Hercules. Two aircraft delivered the equipment and personnel on July 26 and took them home on Aug. 10.

While in country, the squadron prepared to see a clientele base of roughly 5,000 people over a two-week stretch. The final numbers of patients treated and procedures performed totaled more than 6,000, well above the expectations.

"We saw 100 people within the first hour," said Tech. Sgt. Shane Sterner, laboratory technician. "This is a good thing, it feels good."

After the third day the squadron processed 1,181 people through more than 1,590 various treatments. They

treated almost 300 children a day. Radio announcements on the second day helped words spread throughout the town and the countryside.

The medical team used the six buildings that

doubled as the Independence Village schoolhouse to conduct basic triage, medical examinations, dental, optometry and audiological care and provide health and wellness services and dispense medications.

For the most part, the treatments were nothing out of the ordinary... dental extractions, vision problems, head and body lice and worms. However, the medical professionals did get a

few chances to do some out-of-the-ordinary care techniques.

Col. Ronald Stanich, squadron commander and dentist, was able to do a temporary sealant program on the second day on a boy to help prevent future dental decay.

"Other Guard units wrote in their after action reports they wished they could have done this treatment," Stanich said. "So Lt. Col. Richard Byrom (dentist) came prepared with a plastic bonding material. This is the first time we know of that a Guard unit has been able to do this."

Dr. Byrom brought enough material to do the procedure on at least 100 children. "The intermediate restorative material was developed during Vietnam for troops who were being sent to the war for a year, but did not have time for proper dental work," Byrom said.

He said because of administrative issues in the Guard, most units are not equipped to deploy drills, suction, compressors and other needed materials that the 179th was fortunate enough to deploy to Belize. Byrom said after a prayer meeting at his church, a representative from Med Central approached him about donating suction units and other items. Ashland Dental Clinic also offered to help out by loaning equipment for the dentists

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Nurses working in triage assessed the patients needs before they were treated by other medical professionals.